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Title: Problem faced by Arecanut growers in Karnataka.

KUMARI SHOBHA KARANDLAJE (UDUPI CHIKMAGALUR): Arecanut growers are in distress owing to the sudden fall in prices. The import of arecanut is affecting the market. The price of arecanut has declined by around 10%, in a span of last three months. The price of arecanut that had reached around Rs.900 per kilo in August 2014 dropped to around Rs.300 per kg by August 2015. As per estimates, the production has been stagnant at around 6.2-6-3 lakh tones per year. Arecanut Growers Associations cite the import of cheap quality arecanut as the reason for the decline in the price. Low import duty is being levied as per the trade agreement related to south Asia Free Trade Area (SAFT) and imports from the SAARC countries enjoy total exemption from duty. Large quantities of arecanut are being imported from these countries under international trade agreements. The lucrative price for locally grown arecanut can be expected by imposing a total ban on the import of the produce. I urge the Hon'ble Minister to safeguard interests of domestic arecanut growers by hiking the Minimum Import Price of arecanut with immediate effect. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) should also advise its Field Offices to stringently adhere to the quality specifications of arecanut before clearing the imported consignments with a view to prevent inferior quality arecanut entering Indian market and de-stabilize the domestic prices. Karnataka is the largest producer of arecanut followed by Kerala and Assam.